

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Investigation of:

MOTOR VESSEL KITION
ALLISION WITH I-10 BRIDGE,
BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA,
FEBRUARY 10, 2007

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* Docket No.: DCA07FM013
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Interview of: JAY STRAHAN, JR.

U.S. Coast Guard
Marine Safety Unit
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Tuesday,
February 13, 2007

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to notice, at 4:05 p.m.

BEFORE: LIAM LARUE

APPEARANCES:

LIAM LARUE
National Transportation Safety Board

BILL WOODY
National Transportation Safety Board

BARRY STRAUCH, Human Factors Specialist
National Transportation Safety Board

CHIEF RAY BALL
U.S. Coast Guard

PETTY OFFICER ROBERT FEUS
U.S. Coast Guard

MARK PIVACH, ESQ.
on behalf of Jay Strahan, Jr.

BRIAN EISLEN, ESQ.
on behalf of
NOBRA Board of Examiners

W. PETER CONNICK, ESQ.
NOBRA Board of Examiners

CWO GEOFFREY SOBECK
U.S. Coast Guard

LT. COMMANDER SHANNON GILREATH
U.S. Coast Guard

LT. DIANE WICKMAN
U.S. Coast Guard

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I N T E R V I E W

(4:05 p.m.)

MR. LARUE: Okay. Good afternoon. It is Tuesday, February 13th. It is 4:05 in the afternoon. We are at MSU Baton Rouge today to interview Mr. Jay Strahan, Jr. This is Liam LaRue from NTSB. Let's go around and introduce ourselves for the record, please.

MR. WOODY: Bill WOODY, NTSB.

CAPTAIN STRAHAN: Jay Strahan.

MR. PIVACH: Mark PIVACH (ph.), representing Jay Strahan.

PETTY OFFICER FEUS: Petty Officer Robert FEUS, United States Coast Guard.

CHIEF BALL: Chief Ray Ball of United States Coast Guard.

MR. EISLEN: Brian EISLEN, representing the NOBRA Board of Examiners.

MR. CONNICK: Peter Connick, representing the NOBRA Board of Examiners.

MR. STRAUCH: I'm Barry Strauch. I'm a Human Factors Specialist with the National Transportation Safety Board.

CWO SOBECK: I'm Geoff SOBECK, U.S. Coast Guard.

LT. COMMANDER GILREATH: Shannon Gilreath, U.S. Coast Guard.

LT. WICKMAN: Diane Wickman, U.S. Coast Guard.

MR. LARUE: Chief, take it away.

INTERVIEW OF JAY STRAHAN, JR.

1 BY CHIEF BALL:

2 Q. Good afternoon, Mr. Strahan. Sir, how long have you been a pilot?

3 A. Approximately five years.

4 Q. About 5 years. And within those five years, what is your experience
5 with the size vessels?

6 A. With what size?

7 Q. Of size vessels. What type of sized vessels have you piloted --

8 A. All of them.

9 Q. -- within those five years? Okay, all. Meaning from what size to the
10 largest size that you have?

11 A. To the maximum size that's come in the river, a hundred and some odd
12 thousand tons.

13 Q. Okay. Length-wise?

14 A. Probably 900 feet.

15 Q. 900 feet max. Okay. Mr. Strahan, do you have any physical problems?

16 A. High blood pressure.

17 Q. High blood pressure. Any other.

18 A. No, that's it.

19 Q. Okay. Do you take medication?

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. Okay, for?

22 A. High blood pressure, cholesterol and Prevacid, I guess it's like stomach
23 acid type of medicine.

1 Q. Okay. How often do you have to take your medication?

2 A. Daily, every morning.

3 Q. Daily, every morning? Is it just once a day, twice a day?

4 A. Once.

5 Q. Okay. And you said you've been a pilot for five years?

6 A. It will be five years, exactly, I think, May first of this year. Yes, we were
7 commissioned in 2002, I think it was.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. 2001, I don't have the exact date.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. Five years, around five years.

12 Q. Approximately five years, okay. Okay. And whenever you say you're a
13 pilot, what areas on the Mississippi do normally work in, as a pilot, operate as a
14 pilot?

15 A. From New Orleans, mile 88 to Baton Rouge 235, the highway 19.

16 Q. You said you have been a pilot for five years. Did you have an
17 apprenticeship or any kind of training that you had to be involved with for any
18 amount of the time prior to becoming a pilot?

19 A. Yes, we had a one-year apprenticeship.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. We were required to ride 300 ships.

22 Q. 300 ships?

23 A. Yes, in one year.

1 Q. And those rides were under a --

2 A. Pilot supervision.

3 Q. -- pilot supervision. Okay. Was it any one in particular pilot that trained
4 you?

5 A. No, as many as we could, get the pilots we could.

6 Q. Mr. Strahan, were you well rested before you took the, before you
7 boarded the motor vessel Kition?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. What was the weather conditions like that day?

10 A. The sun was just coming up. It was clear for the most part. It was
11 breezy.

12 Q. Breezy, you mean strong winds, light winds?

13 A. It felt like it was a north wind, maybe 10 or 15.

14 Q. Do you remember the river conditions on that day?

15 A. It was the Baton Rouge gauge was somewhere around 25 or 27 feet in
16 that, 26 feet in that area.

17 Q. Okay. The current?

18 A. Was around three, three and a half.

19 Q. Is this, you're basing off an experience or did you get this from some
20 kind of readings?

21 A. This is from the federal site on the internet.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. Maybe Corps of Engineers.

1 Q. Was that the site?

2 A. It was one of them, I think it might have been that one.

3 Q. Okay. When do you normally get these readings, how long before you
4 board a vessel? At what time did you check these readings?

5 A. Normally, during the work we can keep up with them.

6 Q. Okay. How about this particular vessel?

7 A. It would have been afterwards.

8 Q. Okay, afterwards. Okay, sir, in your years of being a pilot, how many
9 ships have you taken off the Apex dock that you've gotten underway?

10 A. I researched it. All I could find is I put two in.

11 Q. Two in, okay. All right, two in. Okay. And you have not departed any
12 vessels?

13 A. Not that I could find.

14 Q. Okay. And you do not recall departing any?

15 A. No.

16 Q. Okay. Can you recall the two that you did put in, by any chance?

17 A. I remember one was a small one and it had that horrible molasses
18 smell. That's how I remember it. It was sickening, it was so strong.

19 Q. Yes, molasses will do that.

20 A. Molasses.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. The other one, I don't remember.

1 Q. When you say small vessel, sir, what do you consider to be a small
2 vessel?

3 A. I believe she was less than 10,000 tons.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. Maybe 8,000 tons.

6 Q. Overall length?

7 A. 8,000 -- around 400 feet, 450 feet.

8 Q. Around 400 feet. The other one you cannot recall?

9 A. No.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. I had the record of it. I don't recall putting it in.

12 Q. Okay, I understand. And I am asking you to recall this from memory as
13 well.

14 Do you remember the draught of that vessel, that particular one?

15 A. No.

16 Q. No. Do you remember the river condition of that time?

17 A. I think it was in 2003.

18 Q. Okay. So you cannot recall the river condition, current, river stage?

19 A. I didn't have any of that written down.

20 Q. Okay. How about whenever you were doing your apprenticeship, when
21 you were in training to become a pilot, were you with any other pilots that have
22 removed any vessels, taking any vessels off that dock, the Apex dock?

23 A. To be honest, I don't remember.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. There may have been, but I didn't research that far back.

3 Q. Okay. With your experience on the river, sir, what is your
4 understanding of the current near the Apex dock, also underneath the I-10 bridge?

5 A. Well, in the position I was in, the current is strong and it just about
6 pushes the bow out at that position.

7 Q. Okay. Anything you think a person who is trained would watch out for
8 while navigating near the Apex dock or the I-10 bridge?

9 A. It pretty much doesn't set you in either direction. Most of our turns are
10 out of Exxon, there's northbound to southbound. And you center on the bridge and
11 you stay towards the west bank. But that would be about it. There's no real set
12 underneath the bridge or near the bridge right there.

13 Q. Any particular reason why you would stay towards the west bank?

14 A. That's where the channel's at.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. On north of the bridge.

17 Q. Okay, going to the bridge?

18 A. North of the bridge, west bank.

19 Q. Okay. What about south of the bridge?

20 A. Then you go to the east bank.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. And you cross over to the east bank. Well, right about the area of the
23 full bay.

1 Q. I'm sorry?

2 A. Right about the area of the full bay --

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. -- you cross over it. Below the buoys. On the, right underneath the
5 bridge, on the east bank of the buoys, the buoy system, you would cross right
6 underneath those to the east bank and follow the east bank all the way down to the
7 red eye crossing.

8 Q. Okay. Sir, the day of the incident, okay? Let's just take this from the
9 time that you started, whenever you boarded the vessel, and just tell us in your own
10 words, everything that happened, even until the vessel was anchored in the Baton
11 Rouge Middle Anchorage.

12 A. Okay. They were still disconnecting the pipeline when I got there.

13 Q. Okay. What time was that sir? Everyone's probably going to ask you
14 what time that was, so pardon the interruptions.

15 A. I forgot all the numbers now. Let's see. It was between 5:30 and 5:45.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. I was supposed to be onboard for 6:00. That's how I remember.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. And I went to the bridge from there.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. There on the bridge, I believe it to be a mate and maybe a deckhand
22 was up there. The deckhand was cleaning and the mate was just standing by.
23 There was no, I hadn't seen the Captain yet.

- 1 Q. Okay.
- 2 A. Then the Agent came up and I spoke to her for a while.
- 3 Q. Okay.
- 4 A. And it was a while later, she left and the Captain came up.
- 5 Q. Okay.
- 6 A. When I had gotten there, the tugboats were already alongside.
- 7 Q. And how many was that?
- 8 A. Three.
- 9 Q. Do you recall which ones were there?
- 10 A. The Gladys would have been in the middle.
- 11 Q. They weren't all on one side, so when you say middle?
- 12 A. Mid-ship area --
- 13 Q. Mid-ship area?
- 14 A. -- starboard side.
- 15 Q. Okay.
- 16 A. I can't think of the other two names right now, but I will have, I will come
- 17 up with them.
- 18 Q. Okay. And the location of them?
- 19 A. One was the starboard bow --
- 20 Q. Okay.
- 21 A. -- and then one was the starboard quarter.
- 22 Q. Okay. They were already in position?
- 23 A. Yes.

1 Q. Okay. And when you mean position, they were already --

2 A. As in, normally the position I would put them in. I would put the big one
3 always on the bow and all these were within a couple hundred horsepower of each
4 other. They were all fairly small. They were all in the 3,000 horsepower range.

5 So the twin screw was the one we put on the bow and it was already on
6 the bow.

7 Q. Okay. You said they were rather small?

8 A. In a three -- all were in the 3,000 horsepower area, which is small for
9 harbor size.

10 Q. What would you consider to be a large, as far as horsepower?

11 A. 42 is nice.

12 Q. 42? Have you dealt with working with --

13 A. All of them.

14 Q. -- all of them? Okay. All right. Go ahead, Captain. You said that the
15 Captain arrived, sir.

16 A. The Captain arrived. The mate had already checked the engine,
17 steering. The radar on the port side was put on the 1.5 head up.

18 Q. All of that on the port side?

19 A. The radar, the port side radar was set. The other, the starboard side
20 radar was on standby.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. They, about that time me and the Captain spoke, we give him the pilot
23 card. He looked it over. He then asked were we ready -- no. I had the mate the

1 check whistle. They hadn't blow the whistle yet and it didn't work. And the Captain
2 said are we ready to go? And I said we're not going to go until the whistle is fixed.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. Then the mate, and they were pushing the button and turning switches
5 and nothing happened. So the Captain did it. And the Captain was on the telephone,
6 I presume with the chief engineer or some other person. Then the chief mate
7 showed that they had the emergency whistle --

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. -- on the roof area and it worked.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. So I told them we were ready to go.

12 Q. Okay. So the emergency whistle working. Okay. Whenever you said
13 that they had the radar on, they had the starboard radar on standby, you said that
14 you spoke to the Captain?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. What did you speak to the Captain about? What was the conversation?

17 A. About how we were going to let go lines and in which direction, what we
18 were going to hold. He informed me that it was his second day onboard. That was
19 about it. Oh, and then I told him about making the tugboat fast, the starboard bow
20 tugboat we had to make fast with the tugboat line. The other tugboats just pushed.

21 Q. You said starboard --

22 A. Starboard bow.

23 Q. Starboard bow, okay. Anything else during that conversation?

1 A. No, that was about it.

2 Q. Okay. Right. Okay, so after the emergency whistle, you verified it was
3 working or the chief engineer did?

4 A. The chief came up later, the chief mate did.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. Then we walked out there. He called the crew and I talked to the
7 linemen on the radio and told them how we were going to start letting go lines. We
8 were supposed to start on the stern. The aft spring was to be held last, it was in
9 front of the wing.

10 And then they started. I had the tugboats, all three of them, push hard,
11 then they started letting go lines.

12 Q. Do you remember in what order they let go of all the lines?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. Okay. Can you start with the very first one, you said the stern was first?

15 A. The stern was first.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. Then aft breast.

18 MR. WOODY: I'm sorry?

19 CAPTAIN STRAHAN: Aft breast. Then it would have been forward
20 spring, forward breast, headline, aft spring.

21 BY CHIEF BALL:

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. The, as the headlines were let go, then the starboard bow tugboat calls.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. Informed me had to stop the engine because one of the cables or wires
3 or ropes were coming out at him, at his boat.

4 Q. Okay. And you said which tug was that?

5 A. Starboard bow tug.

6 Q. Starboard bow tug called you up --

7 A. Said he had to stop his engine.

8 Q. What he was have throttle problems?

9 A. No. He was worried -- I've never had this problem with cables before,
10 but he was worried about the cable being in his wheel.

11 Q. When you say cable, you mean --

12 A. Headline cable.

13 Q. The headline cable. Okay. The cable that's being used --

14 A. For the headlines.

15 Q. -- for the headlines. Okay.

16 A. When he stopped the engine, the bow, it came out. The ship tried to go
17 to the east bank.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. And there was the problem of the spring line, the aft spring line was still
20 connected, hung on the dock.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. And they were pulling it with a wench and finally got it off.

1 The ship started coming out, it went hard port rudder and come ahead
2 on the engine and it was dead slow, then we went to slow. And the starboard bow
3 tugboat still had not come back on yet and she was falling so fast that -- he finally
4 was able to come back ahead on the engine.

5 When he was pushing, it was like he wasn't even there. She was still
6 falling hard. Stopped the engine, slid the center mid-ship tugboat back to the stern.
7 And had him, had the starboard bow boat back hard and went full stern.

8 Q. Who gave the order to go full stern?

9 A. I did.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. And I started the engine in slow or dead slow astern. If you go from an
12 engine stopped to full stern, the engineer or whatever downstairs gets very upset or
13 confused or scared and sometimes you have problems. So, we got the engine
14 started and went full stern.

15 Q. Okay. So you ordered full astern.

16 A. And went to starboard wing and the Captain followed me. And I could
17 see that the stern was clear. The ship, it was coming around faster and faster. It got
18 to the point where I believed I was going to be able to clear the bridge, until it made
19 contact.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. The starboard bow tugboat then said he had to get out of there. He
22 threw his line off and backed out. He thought that maybe one of the wooden timbers

1 had damaged his boat. So, the last time I saw him, he was in the middle span,
2 northbound.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. I slid the other two tugboats all the way to the starboard bow and the
5 ship just fell -- she was about that time close to crossways in the river. And she fell
6 around, stern downstream, and two tugboats went up to the bow and pushed her off,
7 out away from the bridge. And the only point she made contact was when she
8 touched. She didn't slide down the bridge --

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. -- down the inside span. She pretty much came right off.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. I started the engine. Stopped sternway. Brought the, one of the
13 tugboats, I don't know which one of them, to the port bow made fast.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. There was a ship in the anchorage, a tanker and I found out, during this
16 period right there, that was going to go into my spot and that there was a federal
17 pilot onboard. So, I brought, I let the ship fall down the river, put her into the buoy
18 system, dropped the port anchor, then the starboard anchor. And she was a little too
19 long for it, but I held her up with the engine, you know, going ahead and stopping the
20 engine. And then the federal pilot moved out and then we heaved the anchors and
21 were moving back towards the anchorage.

22 Q. Which anchorage was that, sir?

23 A. Meal Buoy's Anchorage is what we call it.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. We got the port anchor up. The ship started going toward the east
3 bank. I put the hard starboard rudder on it come ahead on the engine, and I had the
4 port tugboat pushing hard. The -- it didn't seem like anything was happening. And I
5 was on the starboard wing and I looked up and the indicator wasn't working. So, I
6 ran inside, thinking that we had no engine, and had them drop both anchors.

7 Q. This after you're in the middle in the anchorage?

8 A. This is where I'm coming out and the four anchors up. So, the other
9 tanker had already passed us and we were going to drop down to the anchorage.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. So, we dropped both anchors, talked to the Captain, found out that
12 there was an engine, and just that indicator wasn't working and heaved anchors and
13 dropped down and put it into the buoy system. Not in the buoy system, but in the
14 anchorage.

15 Dropped the port anchor, the starboard anchor, and that was about it
16 then. Then the other pilot arrived.

17 Q. Okay. And then you were relieved?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. Okay. Okay, sir, whenever the starboard bow tug let go, did they give
20 you any indication that they were going to let go, they had to let go?

21 A. Had to let go and before I responded, he had let go. He was -- I could
22 see the cable or line hanging off the starboard bow and he was backing away and
23 gone.

1 Q. Okay. And how did he communicate this to you?

2 A. By radio.

3 Q. Okay. What channel?

4 A. Seventy-seven.

5 Q. Okay. Whenever he communicated this to you and let you know what
6 he was going to do, how far away was the bow of the motor vessel from the bridge?

7 A. It had made contact.

8 Q. Oh, so it made contact?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. Then he released?

11 A. Yes.

12 CHIEF BALL: Okay. Go ahead.

13 MR. LARUE: All right. This is Liam LaRue, NTSB.

14 BY MR. LARUE:

15 Q. I'm going to start you out with a softball here, sir. What's your age?

16 A. 21.

17 (Laughter.)

18 CAPTAIN STRAHAN: 48.

19 BY MR. LARUE:

20 Q. All right. Okay, you mentioned earlier that you were taking several
21 medications. It looks like blood pressure, cholesterol and for stomach acid --

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. -- and you take those daily. Did you take your medicine that morning?

1 A. Every day, every morning.

2 Q. Okay. I'd like to get a little bit more information about the
3 apprenticeship you go through. You mention that in one year, you're supposed to
4 ride on 300 ships.

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. From day one are you piloting the ships? Or could you just tell us little
7 bit more about that?

8 A. The first few days, you know, it's mainly learning. And then you
9 gradually, depending on the pilot, you gradually start operating the ships with him
10 standing by you.

11 Q. Okay. So you're making all the commands and you're --

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. Okay. What about prior to these last five or I guess six years, counting
14 the apprenticeship, what's your maritime experience prior to that?

15 A. When I got out of high school, I worked three years on a deck for J. Ray
16 McDermott, offshore.

17 Q. What?

18 A. J. Ray McDermott is a large offshore company.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. And it was like, it was offshore boats, tugboats. That was '77, '78, '79,
21 that area.

22 Q. Okay. And what was your position on these?

23 A. I was a deckhand.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. Then I eventually got my AB.

3 Q. Okay, when did you get you're AB?

4 A. During that time period. I don't know exactly.

5 Q. And could you just kind of take us through the progression of your
6 career, up to this point?

7 A. I came, I stopped working offshore. I worked as gas stations,
8 mechanic, wrecker services. 1985, I did security work. 1985, I became a policeman
9 in Slidell, where I live at, until '96. So the last two years, I was assigned to DEA.
10 Then I resigned.

11 I started on push boats and I was, I didn't know during this time, the
12 whole time that I had enough time for a Captain's license. When I started
13 researching and decided that's what I want to do and get out of the police work. So I
14 went and got 90 days' service time that I had to have on a boat and then went, got
15 my license. Started on push boats between, on the intercoastal, between New
16 Orleans and we went down, not quite to Brownsville.

17 And then I started with, I worked my way up as in a better job money-
18 wise, and went to L and L Fuel. And I was pushing fuel barges between New
19 Orleans and Port Arthur, Texas. And in the river, their office is on the river, so only in
20 the river maybe ten percent that whole time.

21 Then I moved up to the casino boat in Lake Charles and was mate on
22 the casino boat until the time that I became a pilot.

1 Q. Okay. Now, other than these 300 ships that you have to do in one year,
2 is there any other training or what other requirements are there for you to get your
3 license?

4 A. Prior to that training, we went to, a group of us went to Piney Point in
5 Maryland, at the academy there. And we went through the simulator training, the
6 (indiscernible) simulator and some other courses in pilot training there. That was the
7 initial starting of it. Firefighting school and then everything else would have been
8 after, after we had started.

9 Q. So those course, Piney Point and all that was prior --

10 A. Prior.

11 Q. -- to getting the --

12 A. Prior to starting any official work.

13 Q. Okay. And then once you began the one year apprenticeship, what
14 training was required?

15 A. Only the hands-on, the, you know, riding the 300 ships. That was
16 required at first. Then, when that was over, we were commissioned by the Governor.
17 Then we start an apprenticeship, well, it's not really an apprenticeship, but you start
18 in a position where you are limited in tonnage and draught. And then you work
19 through that for two years, until you max out. And then you're released off any type
20 of restriction. So it would be a restricted position for two years.

21 Q. So then for you, you've been off of that restricted position for three
22 years now?

23 A. Yes.

1 Q. Okay. Now, is there any type of examination from --

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. -- the state or --

4 A. The state gives you an examination at the time of -- we went through
5 training, some training, and it was right around the time, well, it would have been
6 included with the first 300 ships. It was in-class training. The tests would have
7 been -- at the end of that, there was a written test, prior to commissioning.

8 Q. What sort of knowledge is tested on this exam?

9 A. I believe some rules of the road, some docks, locations. That's all I
10 believe I remember on the test.

11 Q. Was there any like practical portion to the exam, or any like ride along
12 type?

13 A. No, that was all during the 300.

14 Q. Okay. You mentioned you checked the current. And I just wanted to
15 confirm, you checked that afterwards?

16 A. Afterwards, yes.

17 Q. What's the standard practice for when you go out to do a piloting?

18 A. Well, normally during the workweek, and I was on my week off here,
19 normally during the work week, I keep track of it, the river stage and the current.

20 Q. Okay. You mentioned you boarded the vessel that morning. You were
21 supposed to be there at 6:00. What's the normal procedures, once you get onboard
22 a vessel, is there a checklist of things you're supposed to do or can you just kind of
23 walk us through that?

1 A. Once you get onboard, you go to the bridge and really just standby and
2 maybe before the captain arrives, the mate is checking the engine, and steering and
3 things like that, and you just watch to make sure that everything's covered. It's just
4 like, in this case, they never tested whistle. So, I had to test that. And everything
5 was working, we were just about ready to go, waiting on the captain.

6 Q. Okay. Do you ever, are you required to do anything else, like walk
7 through the vessel or --

8 A. Well, as far as what? I mean, we go up the stairs and to the bridge and
9 you look around the bridge. And I looked down the side of the ship to see what's
10 hanging over that can be knocked off because a lot of the times, there could be a
11 light on the stern or something, they'd have to move it. But other than that, you look
12 at the equipment, the pilot card, see what you draught is.

13 Q. Yes, that's great. I'm just trying to get an idea of, you know, what you
14 do when you get onboard.

15 A. Basically, just look at everything around.

16 Q. Okay. Have you ever been -- how many times have you piloted a ship
17 of this size before, would you say?

18 A. I looked it up. It was 30 loaded and 30 empty, in the 90,000 tons on up
19 range.

20 Q. Okay. Could you describe what different ways, you know, what are
21 some different ways you could pilot off of that berth bay? Is there a general
22 practice? Do the pilots have like a standard operating procedure for different
23 berths?

1 A. Depending on location.

2 Q. Is there one for the Apex dock or --

3 A. Well, because of that dock, you would have to back down, you'd turn
4 back below the anchorage ship or below the anchorage. You couldn't go above. So
5 really, there's only one way to come out of there.

6 Q. What's the reason that you can't go above?

7 A. Well, there's a sunken barge on the west bank up there. And really,
8 800 feet, I don't know if I'd want to put 800 feet above there. The channel is
9 probably only 500 feet wide when you get up there. All from the middle of that chart,
10 where it's messed up, just north of the bridge, you would be getting real shallow to
11 get right there. And the ship would, especially with that kind of draught, she'd run
12 and when she started running, you couldn't, you wouldn't be able to pull her back.
13 She's hit the bank, especially with that current.

14 Q. What was your --

15 A. And I -- I'm sorry.

16 Q. Oh, no. Continue.

17 A. The bow would push off and the stern would catch a suction and that
18 would be it.

19 Q. Okay. All right. So what was your intention on this morning?

20 A. Get -- back her down below the anchorage and turn.

21 Q. Okay. When you get onboard, do you discuss this, do you discuss your
22 plan with the Captain?

23 A. No, not unless they ask.

1 Q. Okay. What about with the tugs?

2 A. No. I don't like to make anything harder than it already is.

3 Q. Okay. Who calls and requests the tugs for assists?

4 A. The Agent.

5 Q. The Agent does. Do you have any say in how many tugs come or --

6 A. I don't ever go by the Agent. Whatever I need, I either call ahead of
7 time and make sure they're there or I get on the radio and call them.

8 Q. Okay. So on this morning, did you call and request?

9 A. No, it was, there were already three.

10 Q. Okay. In your opinion, do you think that the tugs that were there were
11 sufficient for what you had in mind and what you planned on doing?

12 A. Then or now?

13 Q. Then. Before you got underway did you have any apprehension about
14 the maneuver you planned on doing with the tugs that were available?

15 A. No.

16 Q. Okay. Do you consider this berth there to be a difficult one to pilot off
17 of?

18 A. Absolutely.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. Because of the bridge and because of how far you've got to back down
21 a large ship. And at 45 feet, with that kind of current, it's extremely dangerous.

22 Q. And you mentioned the river stage earlier. What was that again?

23 A. It was 25, 26, 27, between 25 and 27 feet, I believe.

1 Q. And that was at what gauge?

2 A. Baton Rouge.

3 Q. Okay. What level would you consider this in your experience? Is this
4 low, is this high?

5 A. It was high.

6 Q. Okay. As a pilot, do you have any different procedures? What do you
7 think about when the river is at this stage?

8 A. Well, with some ships it really doesn't matter. But with something like
9 that, with that kind of draught, you have to be extremely careful and you have to be
10 on top of it.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. Ships react totally different. They won't turn.

13 Q. Were there any difficulties, were there any issues with communications
14 with the tugs?

15 A. No.

16 Q. Okay. Did you have any lines on when you got the first call from the
17 tug, the tug on the bow?

18 A. Yes, the aft spring was still wrapped around the wood --

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. -- on the dock, after he had let it go.

21 Q. And the forward tug was tied up to you at this time?

22 A. Tied up and stopped, if that's the point we're talking about.

1 Q. And how a long of a period of time would you estimate that they were
2 stopped for?

3 A. I'd only be guessing.

4 Q. Your best guess.

5 A. It seemed like days. A minute or two, maybe. I don't know how to get
6 any closer than that because I was watching the bow so close and I was having to
7 rearrange, at that moment, the whole plan and scheme of things.

8 Q. How far did you bow come off of the dock in that time period?

9 A. That would have been about 200 feet off of and maybe 100 feet off the
10 stern.

11 Q. Okay. Was their engine, were they under power again by the time the
12 stern line --

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. I'm trying to get you to nail down the order of events.

15 A. It kind of like happened at the same time.

16 Q. Okay, you got the stern line off.

17 A. All he did was tug on it with a wench and it came off.

18 Q. Okay. And at that point in time, what was your intention for the ship?
19 Did you plan on continuing with trying attempt the maneuver to --

20 A. Right around this period of time, I had come ahead on the engine.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. And I didn't want to get too much headway, because I still had that line
23 in and I didn't want to hurt somebody, but the towboat's pushing. It's like he wasn't

1 there. She was falling pretty hall. So I stopped the engine before I got any headway
2 because the further I got away from the dock, the worse I had it. And then that's
3 when I went back and hard, backed the tugboat hard on the bow.

4 Q. Okay. What was the first point that you realized that there was a
5 problem? I think you said something earlier about that?

6 A. The tugboat stopped. It was a problem. That was my first problem.

7 Q. But once you got through that and you had already, you had given him
8 the new orders to, you had him come back hard and you had shifted the other two
9 tugs down, and you were starting to swing around, can you just kind of go through
10 your thought process at that time? Were you still looking good at that point?

11 A. I thought, well, I knew I was going to be close. And I thought that
12 possibly it would make it. I had no other choice. I couldn't come -- she was falling
13 so fast in the current, I couldn't come ahead on the engine, because the stern would
14 have never caught up with it, which means, I never would have got into the current.
15 The bow, the stern would never have got straight with the bow, until I had already hit
16 the bridge.

17 Q. Okay. To your knowledge, did anything get caught up in the forward
18 tug's prop?

19 A. No, he never indicated it did.

20 Q. Did the Captain say anything to you --

21 A. Never.

22 Q. -- at all during the whole time?

23 A. No.

1 Q. Okay. After you had hit, you mentioned -- well, I guess actually, after
2 you had hit it and you had kind of come down below the bridge, could you go over
3 again what you had the other tugs do?

4 A. I had to bring, there was two of them, the two small ones, I still were left
5 with, the single screws. One was already made up. I pushed him up and made him
6 on my starboard bow. I brought the other one around to the port bow, and made him
7 up there.

8 Q. Okay. So, both tugs on the bow.

9 A. That's all the tugs I had left.

10 Q. Okay.

11 MR. LARUE: All right. I think that's good for right now for me. Thank
12 you, Captain.

13 MR. WOODY: Barry, you want to take it?

14 MR. STRAUCH: I'll go last.

15 MR. WOODY: All right, fine.

16 BY MR. WOODY:

17 Q. I'd like to get a little clarification. Now, just to make sure that we all
18 understand, you say the aft spring line. Which way did the spring line lead, from say
19 the side of the ship?

20 A. Forward.

21 Q. It was forward?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. There would some tied on the ship aft and leading forward?

1 A. It's in front of the wing. In front of the ship's wing, leading forward.

2 Q. Leading forward, okay. And you call it the aft spring, but it's a spring
3 that leans forward. In other words, that would be a spring that would hold the spin of
4 the current?

5 A. Yes. And that's what we refer to as anywhere from mid-ship back is
6 usually a half spring --

7 Q. Half spring.

8 A. -- no matter where, if it comes from behind the wing or not.

9 Q. Okay. Is the direction of the spring --

10 A. Is forward, in order to hold the ship up against the dock, hold it up. And
11 it's in a position, too, that I didn't have to worry about it getting in the prop.

12 Q. Your first order was to have the tugs shove you against the pier?

13 A. And they were doing that. They were holding it.

14 Q. I think I understood you to say that you wanted to come off the pier and
15 go south under the bridge.

16 A. We were going to back it down the river.

17 Q. Back it down the river. Now, to back it down the river, what do you do?
18 I mean --

19 A. It would have come off the dock and stayed in the current, straight up
20 and down the current, and then, we put a boat on port bow, made fast, and then
21 basically, just shut the engine, kind of like float her down. And they'll use the engine
22 in order just to move to the port or starboard to stay in the current, stay straight in
23 the current.

1 Q. I see. And this wreckage that you said would keep you from going north
2 upriver, about what mile is that?

3 A. I don't know. I've only heard about it a few times. I've heard the
4 tugboats' captains talk about it and they say, right now, that you can only see a part
5 of it. So that would make me not want to go up there, but I've always heard that.

6 Q. Now, the one, what was your first bell that you gave to the ship?

7 A. Dead slow.

8 Q. Dead slow. Dead slow ahead. And the purpose of this was to?

9 A. Make sure the engine starts and to -- well, at that point, we were dead
10 slow, we were going to ease up and hold her up because the headlines, during this
11 whole time, the headlines were being let go and then when she started coming out,
12 then I had to go slow ahead to try and catch her, but I couldn't go any further ahead,
13 because I still had a spring line caught on the dock.

14 Q. Okay. So then you went slow. And the tug calls up and says he's got
15 to let go of the spring or --

16 A. He's got to stop.

17 Q. He's got to stop?

18 A. He told me that the line, and I don't remember if he said line or rope,
19 was coming at him. But I was under the impression that we had wire headlines. And
20 I couldn't understand why, but I just had to, I had to operate from there.

21 Q. Could these wires come up from the starboard side of the starboard
22 bow?

23 A. I believe two did and two off the port bow, I believe.

1 Q. Do you know whether it was one of the lines that came out of the
2 starboard side of the ship that bothered him?

3 A. No, sir, I don't know exactly which one it was that he had problems with.

4 Q. And about how long was he off line?

5 A. That's what seemed like one or two minutes.

6 Q. Okay. And then your next orders were to the tugs, you had the tugs
7 move around?

8 A. Well, I got the starboard bow side back.

9 Q. Yes, all right.

10 A. And he's pushing hard and the ship's not slowing down.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. She's turning still. Even when I come ahead on the engine to slow
13 ahead and had it hard over.

14 Q. Sorry, say it one more time. He's pushing hard on the bow?

15 A. Yes, hard as he can. And I had come up slow with the rudder hard over
16 and, hard to port, and she didn't, she wasn't slowing down.

17 Q. And it was still swinging, the bow was still swinging right?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. And appeared to be gaining speed.

21 Q. What was your hopeful intentions when you came over here, if you
22 hadn't had that spring line? Like we are saying there were two things that didn't go

1 according to plan. One is, if the tug hadn't stopped for a few minutes, and the spring
2 line is -- get the spring line off.

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. What kind of (indiscernible) do you want the spring line?

5 A. The spring line was really more of a distraction than anything else. It
6 was connected, but the rope got tight, making you think that they were going to have
7 to get down there and do it by hand, but she would move a little bit. And then they'd
8 pull some more and she'd move a little bit more, until finally, she came off.

9 Q. I'm sorry, came off, what do you mean by that?

10 A. Off of the dock.

11 Q. Off of the dock.

12 A. Or on to the dock, actually. On top. The top was cement, the side has
13 the wood timbers.

14 Q. Timbers, okay.

15 A. And there's a metal ladder right there, too.

16 Q. So, then there's you're saying that the line got caught under the pier or
17 somewhere?

18 A. In the timbers and maybe in between the timbers and the ladder, the
19 metal ladder. And all it really -- it delayed the rest of the operation and more of a
20 distraction because it came out pretty quick.

21 Q. When the line finally cleared, what was the heading on the ship at that
22 time, or the swing of the ship?

23 A. It was getting close to state capitol. It was turning around.

1 Q. It was pointing at the state capitol?

2 A. Maybe not that far, at that point, but within a short period of time, I was
3 at the capital from there.

4 Q. But you can't recall back at the time the line was clear, where the ship
5 was pointing?

6 A. Below Exxon, and I don't remember exactly how far. I don't know if she
7 was at the capitol. I don't remember that part, because I'm looking at the bridge.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. But I can see in the background that the swing is from the City of Baton
10 Rouge in the background.

11 Q. Is there any kind of any -- I think the same question was asked before,
12 but what do you think sent your bow off the shore there?

13 A. Somebody says that's not an eddy, but it's been related to me by pilots
14 before that there's some kind of push there at that point. And then it doesn't take
15 much, as you can see, that it wouldn't take much of an angle to get all that angle on
16 your port bow from right there.

17 Q. Going back now to the pilot, conversation with the pilot, you yourself,
18 and the master. Did the master have any thoughts, any input into the way of getting
19 the ship off?

20 A. No.

21 Q. Was he concerned about backing through the bridge, for example?

1 A. He was hard to understand and really didn't say anything. I told him
2 what I needed and I told him, other than to give him the pilot card, and told him the
3 draught, and things like, he didn't have nothing else to say to them --

4 Q. When he --

5 A. -- other than which way he wanted to let the line go, and are we ready
6 to go now.

7 Q. But you believe he, you think he understood that you wanted to take the
8 ship through the bridge, downriver through the bridge?

9 A. I never indicated to him.

10 Q. You never indicated?

11 A. I never told him anything about how we were going to turn or --

12 Q. You didn't. Okay. Were the other ship -- there was another ship along
13 side the pier somewhere there.

14 A. It would have been at the grain dock.

15 Q. At the grain dock?

16 A. Yes, that was pretty far below us. There was a boat coming in with a
17 barge right below the bridge into the city dock. I don't know if it was a small tank
18 barge, it seems like it was tank barge, but we had spoken, he knew that I was
19 coming off the dock, and he left the barge there, he tied it and left it there.

20 Q. This ship at the grain dock, would that have interfered with your
21 maneuvers in moving the ship through the bridge?

22 A. No, it would have been an obstacle, along with the ship in the
23 anchorage that you would have to back down between.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. But it wouldn't interfere with anything around the bridge area.

3 Q. You wouldn't chase the bridge.

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. Now, at the time that tug said he had to stop, what was he doing at that
6 moment, until he had to stop?

7 A. Pushing hard straight in.

8 Q. Pushing hard straight in. I was, this is kind of an ancillary question but,
9 you said that you only keep track of the river when you're working your seven days,
10 is it?

11 A. Yes, sir.

12 Q. Your seven days. But this time you were off the schedule, you weren't
13 on a seven day schedule?

14 A. Yes, sir.

15 Q. How is it you were on-call?

16 A. To work for someone.

17 Q. To work for someone. Okay. Is that an arrangement you made with
18 another pilot, or did the dispatcher call you?

19 A. The dispatcher called and asked if I would.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. The day before.

22 Q. The day before?

23 A. Yes. I said I would.

1 Q. The day before. Captain, when you were giving your orders, at the
2 helm, for example, do you customarily watch the rudder angle indicator, or do you
3 rely on somebody else to watch it for you?

4 A. I normally watch it.

5 Q. You normally watch it?

6 A. Yes, sir. Because I've had them go opposite before.

7 Q. I see. Did you -- I didn't keep track of the rudders, but do you recall
8 what rudders you did use that day, say when you were at dead slow?

9 A. At what point?

10 Q. Let's say when you went dead slow for the first time.

11 A. We were started out maybe Port 10, Port 20.

12 Q. Port 20.

13 A. And when she didn't respond, then we went hard over trying to respond.

14 Q. When you went hard over, what was the speed, at that time?

15 A. Well, I was trying to keep no speed at all.

16 Q. Okay. The engine speed?

17 A. Slow.

18 Q. Slow. You went from dead slow to --

19 A. Dead slow to slow and that's as far as I went.

20 Q. Okay. I'm just trying to get a feel for the sequence here. So, at slow
21 head, if I understand correctly, that's when you went hard over, hard port?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. You went from Port 20 to --

1 A. It was 10 or 20.

2 Q. All right, 10 or 20.

3 A. I didn't go directly to hard over I went to 10 first.

4 Q. Okay. Now, when you were an apprentice, do you recall going out of
5 Apex?

6 A. No, I don't recall.

7 Q. You don't recall.

8 A. And when you're talking, you asked the question about Apex, I'm not
9 sure exactly if that's called Apex. Our computer shows Apex, but I was at the bridge.

10 Q. Your friendly vessel was --

11 A. At the bridge.

12 Q. -- closer to the bridge, okay. Someone told us that was Apex two.
13 That's why I used the term.

14 A. I've heard it called Cargo also and heard that Apex was way at the top.
15 So, I'm not exactly sure which position is which.

16 BY CHIEF BALL:

17 Q. Somebody said that --

18 A. I was told that was Apex.

19 Q. Okay. What do you refer to that dock as?

20 A. I've never referred to it as anything.

21 Q. Okay. This one?

22 A. That's where I was at.

23 Q. Okay. So this is where you were at?

1 A. Well, I've always been told it was the general cargo dock.

2 Q. Okay, so you were at, like where this dock goes in a little bit?

3 A. Yes. My stern, the stern was at the bridge.

4 Q. Okay, so the stern was at the bridge?

5 A. Or within a couple of feet north. When I was sideways, I was looking at
6 the bridge, the upper north end of the bridge.

7 Q. Okay. But you definitely were not --

8 A. Absolutely not.

9 Q. You weren't here, you weren't up here?

10 A. No, sir.

11 Q. Okay. Definitely, right here.

12 A. Definitely.

13 MR. LARUE: For the record, he's indicated he was on the dogleg on
14 the pier there. Is that correct, sir?

15 CAPTAIN STRAHAN: West bank just a few feet above the bridge, I-10
16 bridge.

17 BY MR. WOODY:

18 Q. Just to clarify one thing, we interviewed a few different people, so we
19 could get their impressions, but going back to the master-pilot communications, you
20 told the pilot -- did you tell the Captain that you couldn't go north because of the
21 draught or because of this wreckage because of his draught?

22 A. No, I didn't tell him anything.

23 Q. You didn't tell him anything?

1 A. I just knew that I couldn't go up there.

2 Q. I see. Okay. And you didn't tell him you were going to try to move the
3 ship half, in the middle of the bridge?

4 A. No.

5 Q. Okay. Did you confirm with the Captain that you might turn the ship
6 where it was?

7 A. No. The only thing we discussed was equipment and lines and then the
8 whistle not working.

9 MR. WOODY: I have some human performance questions, I think I'll
10 defer to Barry to take up and I'll come back to it later, if he doesn't care. I think that's
11 all I have at this time. Thank you.

12 MR. STRAUCH: My turn?

13 MR. LARUE: Last man standing.

14 MR. STRAUCH: Okay.

15 BY MR. STRAUCH:

16 Q. You were explaining your background. You were a deckhand for a few
17 years, and then you joined the police department --

18 A. Yes, sir.

19 Q. -- in Metairie? You were in the police department for ten years?

20 A. Slidell.

21 Q. Slidell. Oh, I'm sorry.

22 A. It was more than ten years.

23 Q. How many years was it?

1 A. Just over ten years. It was around '84 to '85 I had started and I stopped
2 in '96.

3 Q. That's kind of an abrupt career change, working on the river, to police,
4 to back on the river.

5 A. Well, we can -- I'll explain it to you. In 1986, I chased a carjacker
6 across the Highway 11 bridge across Lake Pontchartrain. I raised the bridge so he
7 couldn't get across. He came back at me 80 miles an hour, broke both my legs. That
8 night, I went into a coma for a week. They told my parents I wasn't going to live --
9

10 CAPTAIN STRAHAN: -- because of a fatty embolism, I believe it was, I had at
11 the lung bone fracture. So, that, a few broken fingers, '96, '95, I had had enough. I
12 tell you what broke the straws back, the camel's back, we went to court, I mainly
13 worked narcotics, and they convinced the jury that the drug dog put the drugs in the
14 trunk of the car. I had had enough. That's the story.

15 BY MR. STRAUCH: An unbelievable story.

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I want that lawyer's name.

17 (Laughter.)

18 CAPTAIN STRAHAN: His client was in law school.

19 CHIEF BALL: I want the dog.

20 (Laughter.)

21 BY MR. STRAUCH:

22 Q. And you said you apprenticed, in your apprenticeship, you worked
23 under many different pilots, different supervision --

1 A. Yes, sir.

2 Q. -- different vessels.

3 A. We usually were assigned one per week, a different pilot every week.

4 Q. So that means you would have worked under 50 or so pilots.

5 A. Well, sometimes you got, you would wind up with same one a couple of
6 times, because of the number of us and then we only had Tuesdays off.

7 Q. So how many different pilots would you say you worked under, at that
8 time?

9 A. I'd have to guess, 30ish.

10 Q. And what kind of differences did you see among their styles, among the
11 way they handled ships and so on?

12 A. There were numerous different styles and each guy believed that his
13 was the right way. And we took all that information and put what we thought was the
14 best ideas out of all them and that's what you chose to use.

15 Q. In looking at these pilots, what have you learned from them in things to
16 avoid and what were the things that you learned that you should do in handling the
17 ship?

18 A. Safety issues, keeping with traffic, watching steering commands, don't
19 let agents dictate how many tugboats you get. It was numerous.

20 Q. Did you see any pilots do something that you said to yourself, this, I'm
21 not going to do?

22 A. Not that sticks out.

1 Q. Did you see differences among the pilots in the kinds of preparations
2 they took for a particular day, a particular vessel, a particular river condition?

3 A. As far as what? There was different pilot exchanges. There was
4 different tugboats. There was different ways to make up tugboats. There was
5 different ways they go into the dock with tugboats, different ways they come out of
6 docks with tugboats. It was just unlimited options.

7 Q. And the differences in the way they came out of a dock with tugboats,
8 what kind of differences did you see?

9 A. They would tug on the port bow. I've seen them not put any tug, come
10 off the dock with no tug on the bow, and put one on the starboard bow. I've seen
11 them come off the dock with no tugboats on the bow and the current brought it
12 around and two tugs would push on the port quarter and let the current bring it
13 around.

14 Q. This particular dock, and now just to avoid confusion, the dock where
15 this vessel was tied up, how many times have you been to this dock before?

16 A. As in the whole dock, I'm not exactly sure of the position, but the whole
17 dock, two times in, that I could find.

18 Q. All right.

19 A. And that was in 2003, I think. I'm not sure what the other one was.

20 Q. And you said you don't, you had never taken a ship out of that dock?

21 A. Not that I remember.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. Not that I could find.

1 Q. So this is your first time taking a ship out of this dock?

2 A. Since commissioning, yes.

3 Q. Okay. Did you go through any maneuver preparations before you got
4 on the bridge because this was the first time you had taken a vessel out of this
5 dock?

6 A. Oh, I had spoken to people prior to this because I had had a ship there
7 approximately two months prior to this with 45 feet and they wanted to sail it at night
8 and I refused.

9 Q. The 45 referring to --

10 A. The draught.

11 Q. And why did you refuse?

12 A. I didn't think it was safe to turn a ship in the harbor down there at night
13 and to go down through the ranges at night. If one of the lights is off, you're going to
14 run the ship aground and then it's going to cost hundreds of thousands of dollars and
15 then you have the chance of an oil spill. It's just not safe. I didn't think it was safe.

16 Q. So the preparation that you took was you talked to different pilots?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. And what did they tell you about this particular dock, taking a vessel this
19 size off of this dock?

20 A. That due to this it's position, it pushes out there. The bow pushes out.
21 The water pushes you out there. And they didn't describe it as an eddy, they just
22 described it, the water pushes you out there.

1 Q. Okay. And what did you take from that? How did you apply that
2 information to how you were taking this vessel out of the dock?

3 A. If I had had a tugboat, then we'd drive out to the middle of the river --

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. -- with the rudder and the engine.

6 Q. What you intended to do was move the vessel so it's parallel to the dock
7 but out into the river?

8 A. Parallel to the current.

9 Q. Parallel to the current.

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. How many feet out would that have been?

12 A. I would have tried for the center of the bridge.

13 Q. Okay. And how far down would you have let the current take the
14 vessel?

15 A. All the way down below the anchorage.

16 Q. About how far is that from the dock?

17 A. I'm guessing 1500 feet --

18 Q. Okay. And then what --

19 A. -- below the last buoy.

20 Q. And then when you got to the anchorage, what would you have done?

21 A. Turn it to the right.

22 Q. How would you turn it?

1 A. The port bow tugboat would have pushed and we would have put the
2 other two tugboats in the starboard quarter and turned it right there.

3 Q. And how long do you anticipate it would have taken you to take the
4 vessel from the dock into the current?

5 A. I don't know but it would have, it could have been days. I mean, there's
6 nothing -- it didn't matter to me how long it was going to be.

7 Q. Okay. In your mind with (indiscernible) operating, how long do you
8 think should have taken, from the time all the lines let go until the time you moved
9 the vessel into the current, before you took, before the vessel started going
10 downstream?

11 A. From the time we let go of the lines until the time we turn the ship or
12 just the time we got the position of turning the ship?

13 Q. Yes. Well, until the time you would have expected the vessel to have
14 been in the current and going downstream, under the bridge?

15 A. She would have been in the current. All we'd have had to do is line her
16 up so, maybe 15 minutes.

17 Q. Okay. At what point in this estimated 15 minutes, did the tug say I have
18 to let go of the line?

19 A. We're talking about two different things now.

20 Q. Okay. I'm misunderstanding.

21 A. You're talking coming off the dock and getting into position to back
22 down the river.

23 Q. Okay.

1 A. Fifteen minutes. It only took a couple minutes for the tugboat to stop
2 pushing.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. And during that time is when the current had her, had the bow of the
5 ship.

6 Q. And you said that the tug had stopped pushing for about one to two
7 minutes?

8 A. That's what I would guesstimate.

9 Q. Okay. When the tug said that, what was your response to the tug?

10 A. Okay. There's nothing I could -- I mean, I couldn't tell him to push. I
11 just had to change plans.

12 Q. And how did you change your plans?

13 A. By trying to come ahead on the ship, see if could maintain the current
14 without him. I had the other two tugboats still pushing.

15 Q. So, by a change of plans, you didn't move the tugs up, you just had
16 them push and --

17 A. I had them continue to push. Then we had that spring line incident, but
18 that came along fairly quick. That's when we had it hard over and come ahead on
19 the engine to slow. But during this time, the bow was steadily speeding up.

20 Q. During the one to two minutes. When you say this time, what do you
21 mean by this time?

22 A. During the one to two minutes and I had one to contact. One to contact.

1 Q. So as soon as the tug said that, that's basically when you lost control of
2 the bow?

3 A. Yes, because once you got in the current, you had no control.

4 Q. Okay. And what was the time that you estimated between the time the
5 tug said that and the vessel made contact with the bridge?

6 A. I would have to guess.

7 Q. To the best of your ability.

8 A. Three, four minutes maybe.

9 Q. When the tug was basically stopped for one to minutes and then the tug
10 was able to come back on?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. What did the tug say to you, at that time?

13 A. That he was pushing again.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. That was the end of that conversation.

16 Q. And did you say anything in response?

17 A. No.

18 Q. What was the Captain --

19 A. I might have said okay. I don't remember exactly. I may have just
20 acknowledged his statement but that would have been it.

21 Q. Okay. And during this whole sequence, who were you talking to? You
22 had a radio and you had a cell phone. Who were you talking to on the radio?

23 A. At what point?

1 Q. Well from the time the vessel started to move until the time of the
2 allision?

3 A. Only spoke to the tugboats and then gave commands to the
4 quartermaster, engine commands.

5 Q. Did the Captain say anything to you in this sequence of events?

6 A. No. He would sometimes relay my commands and sometimes not.

7 Q. Okay. You were also on the cell phone at that time?

8 A. No, sir.

9 Q. Okay. When did you make your last cell phone conversation?

10 A. Before or after?

11 Q. Before.

12 A. I'd have to check my phone. I don't have it with me. The last phone call
13 would have been either to the launch service or to the -- to one of the launch
14 services prior to my arrival, quite a bit prior to my arrival.

15 Q. Okay. You said that there was wreckage there and that sort of
16 prevented you from going upriver?

17 A. That's what I was told. So I wasn't about to bring this one -- I have not
18 looked for it or seen it. That's just what I've been told.

19 Q. And where is the wreckage located?

20 A. Above the bridge. Above Apex, up there somewhere, which would be
21 the only point that you could attempt to turn.

22 Q. About how far upriver would that be?

1 A. Just above Apex is a position where you'd want to turn if you were
2 going to turn there.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. I have had one pilot tell me he turned there.

5 Q. Okay. Is that wreckage on the chart anywhere?

6 A. I don't know.

7 Q. If the wreckage was a hazard to navigation, would you expect it to be on
8 the chart?

9 A. Well, all up and down the river that close the bank, there's, you have
10 sunken barges or sunken dredges.

11 Q. That are not on the charts?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. Yes, they are not on the charts?

14 A. Yes, they are not on the charts.

15 Q. Okay. How many different pilots told you about the sunken barge?

16 A. The tugboats had mentioned it and I had heard it from a pilot
17 somewhere down the line.

18 Q. Okay. This size vessel you said you had piloted before. Do you know
19 about how many times you had piloted a vessel this size?

20 A. Yes. I had been on this ship one time before. I counted 30 loads and
21 30 empties and that's in the 90,000 ton on up range.

22 Q. Okay, I remember that. When were you on this vessel before?

23 A. I think it's 2005. I had brought it up out of New Orleans.

1 Q. Where did it dock?

2 A. I think we had gone on the Burnside Anchorage, I believe. Or I had got
3 off on the Burnside. One of the two. I don't know if it stopped there or if I got off
4 there.

5 Q. Okay. About how many vessels have you piloted all together?

6 A. Since?

7 Q. Since you got your commission.

8 A. About 700.

9 Q. So this would be about eight percent or so of vessels, this size?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. Is there anything special you have to know or do when you pilot a
12 vessel of this size?

13 A. I find them easier. I ask for them.

14 Q. Why is that?

15 A. I just find them easier and more -- respond better, except of course in
16 that situation with the high river right there. But on normal moving conditions, when
17 you have that kind of draught in New Orleans where we usually stop, it's a fairly easy
18 turn.

19 Q. You said in a general workweek, you check the river conditions
20 regularly, but this was a week off for you.

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. So when was the last time you checked the river conditions before you
23 piloted the vessel?

1 A. Monday or Tuesday.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. And the river was falling. And I have to do that because the Huey P.
4 Long Bridge is so low and we have to make do that for clearance, for air draught.
5 That's why I keep track of it.

6 Q. You checked it for let's say four or five days or so before the accident?

7 A. Yes, sir, it would have been about that.

8 Q. Okay. And how did you find the actual weather conditions compared to
9 the last time you had checked it?

10 A. The gauges say it had fallen, but the condition was about the same. It
11 didn't appear that the river had slowed down at all.

12 Q. Okay. Now in your experiences, does any one type of river condition
13 dominate or your experience on the river has been through all conditions?

14 A. All conditions.

15 Q. Okay. So, how --

16 A. We started out, I think, at around, it seems like 10, 11 feet when we, the
17 New Orleans gauge, when we were commissioned. And she's nine something right
18 now.

19 Q. So how challenging did you find these particular river conditions that
20 you faced on the day of --

21 A. With a loaded ship, extremely. You have to know where to be at. If you
22 get up underneath the bend, the ship's not going to turn until the current hits a
23 rudder.

1 Q. Now, in you experience as a river pilot, have you ever had another
2 incident or accident before when you were piloting a vessel?

3 A. Yes, sir.

4 Q. Okay, when was that?

5 A. '05, I think. White Castle Lane Bridge. I had gotten onboard the ship, I
6 had put in the Burnside Anchorage or Burnside Terminal, when it unloaded, it was
7 too high, the air draught was too much to go to New Orleans. They brought it to
8 White Castle Anchorage. I got on it. I was checking VCC, New Orleans, checking
9 the air draughts and calculating, make sure we had no problem going down.
10 The Captain wanted to heave anchors. I told him okay and he heave up
11 in to a position with the ship in front of us, he heaved the quarter anchor and while
12 he was heaving a starboard anchor, somehow he got on the inside of the ship in
13 front of us.

14 I called the tugboats. He was Russian, I believe. I spoke to him and it
15 was like I was talking to that wall right there. He didn't even -- he didn't acknowledge
16 me nor care what I was saying. I tried to explain to him in all kind of different
17 languages, even as minor as we're going, do you understand, we're going to hit?
18 And it didn't really matter to him.

19 I asked him to ask the mate what the distance was between the two
20 ships. He said 40 meters. Had two tugboats. I called one of them. What's the
21 distance between the two ships? Forty feet. Captain, we're going to hit. Do you
22 understand that there's going to be a collision? We're going to make contact here,
23 do you understand? He went half astern. And as soon as he did, I stopped the

1 engine and had the tugboat push hard. Because of him going astern, she torqued to
2 the right and there was contact.

3 Q. Was there an investigation of this incident?

4 A. There -- yes.

5 Q. Who conducted it?

6 A. Coast Guard New Orleans.

7 Q. And what was the outcome of it, in terms of your license?

8 A. Oh, nothing.

9 Q. Okay. Was there a report issued?

10 A. I never saw any of that.

11 Q. Okay. Any other incidents that you've been involved in?

12 A. No, sir, not that I can remember.

13 Q. Okay. Have you had any incidents while driving, experiences in driving
14 while intoxicated, driving (indiscernible) vehicle?

15 A. No, sir. I don't drink. No speeding tickets. No wrecks.

16 Q. Once you got your commission, were you required to take any other
17 additional tests or additional training by the Pilots Association?

18 A. Once we were commissioned?

19 Q. Yes.

20 A. No, sir. I believe after we were commissioned, we had the one year
21 apprenticeship. Then when our school started, then we had classes that we
22 attended at our school, at the maritime school in Covington.

1 Q. Okay. And then you're all done with the 300 vessels, you're all done
2 with the class --

3 A. Yes, sir.

4 Q. -- and you're all done with the restriction time. And this was, let's say
5 about three or four years ago or so, when you were released to pilot any type of
6 vessel.

7 A. That would be about right.

8 Q. Okay. From that time on, were you required to take any additional
9 training or courses?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. Okay. What kind of training was that that you were required to take?

12 A. There's -- I'd have to go through the stack there, there was so many of
13 them. There's merchant ship handling, I know was one. I can't remember the rest of
14 them offhand, the names of them.

15 Q. Where did you take this training?

16 A. In Covington, Louisiana, which is at our maritime academy.

17 Q. And you're required to take course there like year, or how long?

18 A. Yes, so many hours a year.

19 Q. Okay. And that's for the duration of your being a pilot?

20 A. Yes, sir, everybody.

21 MR. STRAUCH: All right. I have no further questions.

22 MR. LARUE: Ray?

23 BY CHIEF BALL:

1 Q. I have some more follow-up questions, sir. At the time of the accident,
2 what was the draught of the motor vessel?

3 A. 44.7.

4 Q. 44.7. Okay. Where did you get that information from?

5 A. The pilot card.

6 Q. Okay. I believe earlier, but I might be wrong about this, you said that a
7 paint barge was coming upriver?

8 A. Well, it stopped. It looks like there's a barge there, isn't there, below
9 the bridge?

10 Q. Yes.

11 A. A little bit further below that position there.

12 Q. Okay. And did you communicate with that barge?

13 A. Yes, sir.

14 Q. On what channel?

15 A. I don't know if it was 67 or 77. I don't remember offhand.

16 Q. 67 or 77?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. Okay. Sir, going back to your experience, how many vessels have you
19 taken up to Exxon?

20 A. I didn't count.

21 Q. Where was the last vessel that you took up to Exxon?

22 A. I don't recall right now. I would have to go back to the record. I couldn't
23 even guess.

1 Q. Okay. No guess at all? A month, two months ago?

2 A. No, I don't know.

3 Q. Okay. Looking at the picture up there, you said that the location that
4 you heard that just from one pilot or some tugboat operators?

5 A. Both.

6 Q. Both. When did you hear of the sunken barge? How long ago has it
7 been? Was it a month ago, two?

8 A. Months. Months.

9 Q. Months ago?

10 A. Months.

11 Q. Okay. And you said on the west bank side of it?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. Okay. You said a little bit north of the Apex dock?

14 A. It's, I don't know -- I've never seen it. I was just told. The only position I
15 would know that if you would turn or could turn is just above the Apex dock. So I
16 presume that that's where it's at but I don't know. I've never seen it.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. They said right now that there's a portion or a small piece sticking out of
19 the water.

20 Q. Okay. And you said, approximately, how long ago did you hear about
21 this sunken barge?

22 A. Less than a year.

1 Q. Less than a year. Okay. All right, so less than a year. Since then have
2 you taken --

3 A. Well the tugboat had said something about it the other day, that's why
4 I'm saying there's a little piece sticking out of the water right now.

5 Q. Okay. So approximately, less than a year, you heard about this?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. Have you taken any deep draughts up there past I-10, past that area
8 since then?

9 A. Oh, yes but I don't know exactly how long ago. I'd have went to Exxon.
10 I'd either been into or out of Exxon in the last year so many times.

11 Q. Okay, so since you found out about the sunken barge, you have taken
12 deep draughts past that area?

13 A. Oh, yes.

14 Q. Upriver and downriver?

15 A. Well upriver would be deep draught. Downriver would be empties.

16 Q. Okay, all right. And you had no problems?

17 A. Oh, no. I don't get that close to the bank.

18 Q. Okay. Okay, so obviously, the pilots are still taking deep draughts and
19 empties past that area. Correct?

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. And has there been any reports of any problems?

22 A. No, not that I'm aware of.

23 Q. Okay.

1 A. It's like I said before, there's up and down the river, there's always
2 something close to the bank like that, normally. And as long as you're in the river, in
3 the channel, there's really no worry or nothing to be concerned about.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. Just turning it would be a concern.

6 Q. Okay. All right. Has, do you know if anybody has reported this to the
7 Coast Guard?

8 A. No, sir, I don't know.

9 Q. So do you know of any broadcast notice to mariners that's out?

10 A. I don't know.

11 Q. Okay. Have you see this barge?

12 A. No.

13 Q. Do you know somebody that has?

14 A. I don't know who I heard it from.

15 Q. Okay. How far away from or to the bank does it, or how far is it
16 extended into the shipping lane, if it is extended?

17 A. I don't know a number.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. I was just told that it's north of the Apex dock and I would presume that
20 it was right above the Apex dock, agreeing with them, because that would be the
21 only place you would turn that would interfere.

22 Q. Could -- is there any other place to turn between the I-10 bridge and the
23 190 bridge?

1 A. No way I would turn.

2 Q. There's no way -- do you know of pilots -- do you know if they turn
3 anywhere else, just from your experience and training?

4 A. Above the bridge, never, other than out of Exxon.

5 Q. Okay. So, some do turn at Exxon?

6 A. Well, to come out, you have to.

7 Q. Okay. Have you ever turned out of Exxon?

8 A. Oh, yes.

9 Q. Okay. Coming from where?

10 A. From Exxon.

11 Q. Okay. So coming only from Exxon.

12 A. Yes, only. Only.

13 Q. You've never taken a vessel that was south of Exxon and gone up to
14 Exxon just to turn it around?

15 A. No.

16 Q. Okay. Okay, just to make sure that I am clear on this, you stated that
17 the only conversation prior to getting underway with the Captain of the motor vessel,
18 was that you talked to him about equipment and lines. Was there anything else?

19 A. And the horn.

20 Q. And the horn.

21 A. That was it.

22 Q. Anything else? Okay.

23 A. And his two days onboard. That was about all I could understand.

1 Q. No plan? Once again, just to reiterate, no description of how the
2 operations would go, how the procedure would go with getting the vessel underway?

3 A. No.

4 Q. Okay. All right.

5 A. Other than a description of how we take the lines off, the order --

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. -- would be the only thing applied to that.

8 Q. Okay, so there was no agreement or nothing like that?

9 A. No.

10 Q. None was made. Okay. I just want to verify on here. What I'm handing
11 you, sir, is the "Master-Pilot Exchange of Essential Information," if you could review
12 that. Are you familiar with this document, sir?

13 A. What was the question? I'm sorry.

14 Q. Are you familiar with this document? Have you seen this document
15 before?

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. Okay. Is that your signature at the bottom?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. Okay. Approximately, they're not numbered, five lines down, it states,
20 "Has the proposed passage plan been discussed and agreed with the pilot?"
21 Obviously, you can see the Captain's initials --

22 A. Yes.

1 Q. -- next to it. Was there a passage plan discussed and agreed upon with
2 the pilot?

3 A. No.

4 Q. Or with yourself?

5 A. No.

6 Q. Did the master, you know, brief you on, brief you verbally, on the
7 vessel's maneuvering characteristics and/or current status?

8 A. No. Normally this is -- sometimes they have the pilot -- this is not really
9 a pilot card. The pilot card has the draught, the ship, the RPMs for each --

10 Q. I understand.

11 A. -- the number of starts, maybe percentage of backing power. And
12 sometimes they thrown in this stack of papers and they ask you to sign it. And
13 sometimes I do and sometimes I don't.

14 Q. Okay. All right. So --

15 A. But the pilot card is usually what, I mean the main pilot card is what we
16 go by. That has the draught and stuff like that on it.

17 Q. Yes, sir. Yes, sir. So, did you sign anything else that day?

18 A. Name in the log book, I put that in there.

19 Q. Okay, log book. You put log book on (indiscernible) that vessel's log
20 book?

21 A. Yes, yes.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. And I think that's it. That's all I can remember.

1 Q. Okay, so you signed the log book and the master and pilot exchange,
2 you, and that, once again, is your signature?

3 A. Yes. Yes, it is.

4 CHIEF BALL: Okay.

5 BY MR. LARUE:

6 Q. Just a couple of questions. You mentioned that you were on your week
7 off here. Could you explain what your typical schedule is like?

8 A. Seven on and seven off.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. And we're in rotation to take a ship during your workweek, then you're
11 off. You're at the end of the line. And it works like that in rotation type of.

12 Q. So in a week on, how many ships do you normally --

13 A. Five to -- four to eight.

14 Q. Okay. And next, bear with me. I apologize to go through this again, but
15 I just want to make sure I have this straight in my head. First I want to go through
16 your intended maneuver again, just one more time and how you would have
17 everybody set up.

18 Okay, so you're tied up portside to facing upriver. And you've got one
19 tug on your starboard bow.

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. And that was which tug? Well, there was the twin screws and --

22 A. Yes, I can't -- I just can't think of the bow tug and stern tug.

23 Q. Okay. What was the location of the next aft tug?

- 1 A. It would have been mid-ship area.
- 2 Q. Okay, mid-ship. And then the location of the third tug?
- 3 A. Aft of the wing.
- 4 Q. Aft of the bridge wing. Okay, perfect situation, you get all your lines off.
- 5 Where are your engines now?
- 6 A. Well, it would be dead slow ahead to make sure she was running, first.
- 7 Q. Okay. Dead slow ahead. And you have, what are the tugs doing?
- 8 A. Well, all the lines are onboard now?
- 9 Q. You've got all the -- yes, this would be your plan scenario here, for what
- 10 you wanted to do.
- 11 A. All the boats would stop. Stop all the boats.
- 12 Q. All of the tugboats?
- 13 A. Yes.
- 14 Q. Okay. I just want to clarify. The forward tug has a line on him?
- 15 A. Yes, and it would remain there.
- 16 Q. Okay. Now, so you're ahead slow. And what's your next step?
- 17 A. I was dead slow. We'd got to slow.
- 18 Q. Dead slow, okay.
- 19 A. And we'll back that starboard bow tug a little bit.
- 20 Q. Okay.
- 21 A. At the same time, we would bring one up to the port bow and make it
- 22 fast.

1 Q. Okay. So what -- how is the ship moving, at this time? Did you have
2 any rudder on?

3 A. Oh, yes, to keep it jacked up into the current.

4 Q. Okay. So you would have what rudder?

5 A. The port rudder.

6 Q. Okay, so you're starting to slide over parallel.

7 A. And it wouldn't take much, if you just get the head up a little bit, she'll
8 walk out, by herself.

9 Q. Okay. So the forward tug is pulling back how -- what in --

10 A. Oh about half maybe.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. Just to get the head out.

13 Q. Okay. So you've got her out. Which tug would you send around to the
14 portside?

15 A. Whichever was the biggest of the other two.

16 Q. Okay. And what would you do with the last tug?

17 A. Have her standby and probably standby on the port bow, because that
18 tug wouldn't be as powerful as the starboard bow tug, which would hopefully would
19 be the biggest on the starboard bow.

20 Q. Okay. So at this point, you've got starboard forward tug pulling out.

21 A. Right.

22 Q. You've moved another one up to the port bow.

23 A. Yes.

1 Q. And the third one is?

2 A. Standby on the port side.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. And then when she got the head out in the river a little bit, I'd stop
5 everything.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. And the port bow tug would be made up by then.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. And if we had a little bit of headway, I would back both of them hard to
10 get a little sternway and then use the engine to stay in the turn, the engine and the
11 rudder.

12 Q. Okay. And then as you get down below the bridge?

13 A. Once you got sternway and you would use dead slow ahead and pretty
14 much probably keep it on dead slow ahead in order to maintain as in the stream,
15 she's going to stern still.

16 Q. Okay, and then below the --

17 A. We would work the tugs. Stop, we might have to have one push, they
18 would just -- once you got sternway, you would just watch it from there.

19 Q. Okay. And so now, we'll got to what actually occurred.

20 You got your lines off except for the stern line. Correct?

21 A. Aft spring.

22 Q. Aft spring line, okay. And you've got the tugs in the same position we
23 just discussed.

1 A. Right.

2 Q. And you're starting your maneuver, just continue through, and just try
3 and position all of them.

4 A. At what actually happened or --

5 Q. Yes, what actually happened.

6 A. It would be easier to show you if I had something on paper, it would be
7 easier.

8 Q. There you go. Ask and you shall receive.

9 A. And we have -- do we have something small we can use as a ship?

10 Q. Here how about a pencil?

11 A. Okay. I'm just going to draw the upper end of the bridge. That's about
12 the position we started in.

13 Q. This line's the pier?

14 A. Yes, that's the pier. The current might not be in the direct, or the right
15 angle, right here, but it's not going to take much for the current to get inside the ship
16 right there.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. When the tugboat stopped, we're in a position like this, the spring line --
19 we were at dead slow. The tugboat stops prior to this. We would have been like this
20 when the tugboat stopped. We come out. We release the spring line, we was a little
21 bit ahead, we would have come over port rudder, hard to port, and went ahead on
22 the engine. And there's no way -- she's steady falling.

23 BY CHIEF BALL:

1 Q. How much ahead on the engine? I'm sorry.

2 A. Slow was the last one.

3 Q. Slow, okay?

4 A. And she's steady falling. And when the other tugboat, the tugboat on
5 the bow starts pushing again, it's still falling.

6 During this point in here where I got to make a decision what we're
7 going to do, there's no way with the bow falling that I could have put -- that I could
8 have come ahead on the engine with full ahead and got up underneath that bow
9 before it hit that pier.

10 BY MR. LARUE:

11 Q. Okay. Can you back it up a little bit to let's say, all right, the forward tug
12 is stopped at this point, correct?

13 A. Okay.

14 Q. What are the two aft tugs doing?

15 A. Well, for a little while, they're pushing until we make the decision to go
16 ahead and turn.

17 Q. Okay. So they're in the original position. They're in their original
18 positions on the stern and --

19 A. And mid-ships.

20 Q. -- and mid-ships, until when?

21 A. Until the forward tugboat is pushing and there's no slowing down.

22 Q. Okay.

1 A. Then I stopped everybody. The starboard bow tugboats are pushing or
2 backing as far as he can. The middle tugboat falls down to the stern and those two
3 tugboats are pushing as hard as they can. The engine is now full astern.

4 Q. Uh-huh.

5 A. And she's -- this width is not right, but she comes around and then
6 makes contact like right there.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. We were just about close to crossways in the river right there.

9 Q. Okay, great. Thank you. That clears it up for me.

10 BY CHIEF BALL:

11 Q. Sir, you said that you had a dead ahead or slow ahead? I'm sorry.

12 A. Dead slow ahead when we were along side the dock here --

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. -- was the first command. And when started coming out and I was
15 losing it, I went to slow ahead.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. But I was, I couldn't go any more on the engine, because I still had a
18 line snag in there. And I even considered jerking it out. I was afraid of hurting
19 somebody because the line was so tight.

20 Q. Okay. So you had engine order -- you don't have to go through the
21 whole thing again. Your next engine order, you said you had to slide.

22 A. Stop engine.

23 Q. Stop engine. Then from there?

1 A. I started the engine astern dead slow and worked it up to full astern.

2 Q. Okay. So where do you go from -- you'd go from stop, you're very
3 ahead, just --

4 A. Dead slow astern.

5 Q. Dead slow astern. And then the next one?

6 A. Slow astern.

7 Q. Uh-huh.

8 A. Half astern.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. Full astern.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. And just one right after the other.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. As soon as I could see that the engine was running or feel it.

15 CHIEF BALL: All right thanks.

16 MR. LARUE: Thanks. We won't do that again. I apologize.

17 CAPTAIN STRAHAN: I just wanted you to understand that's actually
18 how, what happened, you can see it, other than trying to tell you.

19 MR. LARUE: Yes, it takes me actually being able to see it to figure it
20 out. You can tell it to me 20 times and --

21 CAPTAIN STRAHAN: I thought it would be easier for you that way.

22 MR. LARUE: Yes, I appreciate it.

23 BY MR. LARUE:

1 Q. Does the Pilot Association have any sort of just written procedures? Do
2 you guys have a book that you carry onboard, do you have anything, guidelines for
3 how you're supposed to do things, standard operating procedures?

4 A. No, I don't believe.

5 MR. LARUE: All right. Bill?

6 BY MR. WOODY:

7 Q. Just a couple of things. When your -- you mentioned that you line tied
8 to the pier and you lost the lead tug, the one on the bow.

9 A. Yes, sir.

10 Q. And one tug would be pushing mid-ship and one tug pushing the stern.
11 And so later, you moved the mid-ship tug back.

12 A. Yes, sir.

13 Q. Okay. Now, you had two tugs, one mid-ship and one on the stern
14 pushing. Would stopping the one on the stern, would have helped you to slow the
15 speed down of the bow out?

16 A. It was -- it feels to that on these, even when the tugboat was pushing on
17 the bow, that there's not much -- you can't just rely on the tugboat, they just feel like
18 they're not there, especially with this river in draught. No matter what he would have
19 done, it was like he wasn't there. It's just -- and the point proven as on the starboard
20 bow tug. When he pushed, he was pushing going backwards. The ship was coming
21 down.

22 Q. He was pushing going backwards?

23 A. He was pushing ahead and the ship was and him --

1 Q. Oh, I see, the whole thing. He was losing ground.

2 A. Yes. Yes, sir, losing ground.

3 Q. Okay. Captain, when you were (indiscernible), was that your idea or
4 was that something the Pilot Association assists you to do?

5 A. Yes, sir.

6 Q. It did. So, then you were, you had some sort of acceptance into the
7 Pilot Association before (indiscernible)?

8 A. No, sir.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. That was made like a prerequisite.

11 Q. Prerequisite?

12 A. Yes, sir.

13 Q. Okay. Now, did you acquire a Federal pilot license before joining
14 NOBRA?

15 A. Yes, sir.

16 Q. You did. What kind of vessel do you serve on during that or tied to that
17 license?

18 A. For the pilotage, we had to ride ships up and down the river.

19 Q. I see.

20 A. To get the pilotage time for the --

21 Q. So it was during your apprenticeship that acquired the time to get the
22 times for your pilot, your federal license?

23 A. No, sir. When I came into the association, I had a master 16.

1 Q. Yes, okay.

2 A. And we had to obtain our pilot's license prior to being commissioned.

3 Q. Prior to being commissioned.

4 A. Yes, sir.

5 Q. But during your --

6 A. Actually, prior to training also.

7 Q. Okay, so part of your --

8 A. You couldn't be accepted without it.

9 Q. So, in other words, you had a license before you started your
10 apprenticeship?

11 A. Yes, sir.

12 Q. The new pilots here in the area have some very high numbers and
13 yours is 38?

14 A. Yes, sir.

15 Q. How come it's 38?

16 A. Because my dad retired and I took his number.

17 Q. I see.

18 A. He just retired.

19 Q. That clears that up.

20 A. It's at a point now when the last bunch of us got in that the numbers, we
21 filled in the holes.

22 Q. Oh, I see. Okay.

23 BY MR. STRAUCH:

1 Q. How many NOBRA pilots are there, sir?

2 A. Over 100.

3 Q. Just over 100. I don't know the exact number. It's just over 100.

4 BY MR. WOODY:

5 Q. When you mentioned Covington or an academy. Whose academy is
6 that? Is that NOBRA's academy?

7 A. It's -- NOBRA, I'm not sure exactly how, NOBRA has some kind of
8 interest in it. I believe the shipping company pays for it.

9 Q. I see. And is this some college or --

10 A. It's an institute that is owned by, I think it's just one person it's owned
11 by. I'm not sure of his degrees and all. It has a, we have a simulator there, and we
12 have classes some pilots teach, and then they have inside, outside instructors come
13 in also.

14 Q. Okay. And this is Covington?

15 A. Yes, sir. It's --

16 Q. In Louisiana?

17 A. Yes, sir.

18 Q. Okay. Is that the --

19 A. It would be on one of my papers.

20 Q. Oh, okay.

21 A. I don't know the exact name of it.

22 Q. We'll pick it up from there.

1 So, if it had been your plan to go upriver and turn, what would you have
2 done? I mean, you couldn't turn, like you said --

3 A. I wouldn't even consider it.

4 Q. You wouldn't consider it. Other than turning in the vicinity of the
5 wreckage boat, what other option was open to you? I realize that the bow started,
6 you lost the bow, not all options were open, but --

7 A. There was no option.

8 Q. But if --

9 A. I could have dropped anchors. It wouldn't have worked. It would have
10 swung the stern into the bridge. If the -- and there's crosses, I believe there's a
11 cable crossing through there, a pipeline or both, the anchor probably wouldn't have
12 held. It just, it blew past the radar quickly.

13 Q. How deep was the water at that height?

14 A. It's deep all the way to the bank, but I don't know the exact depth.

15 Q. Is it deep all the way out to the pier?

16 A. To the pier. But once you get past the pier, it's shallow.

17 Q. I wonder if you'd take a few moments and just draw a picture of you
18 alongside the pier, large enough to show the lines. Maybe you could make it, maybe
19 you could make something like --

20 A. I would just need a --

21 Q. -- another picture of the ship, make it large enough to show the lines, so
22 that we can eventually identify this line that got snagged under the pier.

23 A. Okay. I don't lose points for drawing, do I?

1 Q. No, no.

2 A. Like stick people. Actually, that's too long. And I'm not sure what point
3 off the stern, it would have four stern lines, wing of the ship, and two breast lines.
4 Just forward of the bridge, two springs, two forward springs, two breast, four head,
5 from whatever point they came off the head at.

6 Q. Right. And which is the spring line we've been hearing about getting
7 caught?

8 A. Right here.

9 Q. One of those two?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. Would you draw an arrow to that spring just -- yes. And maybe you
12 could put a one there, so we can refer to that as -- and circle around it.

13 A. Okay.

14 Q. So we can know that the one with the circle around it is an --

15 A. Aft spring.

16 Q. -- pointing to the aft spring. That one of those two got caught.

17 A. Yes, sir.

18 Q. How did you learn that a spring got caught? Did the Captain tell you?
19 Did you see it?

20 A. I could see it.

21 Q. You could see it.

22 A. Yes, it was above the deck of the ship.

1 Q. Thank you very much. Hopefully I'll keep it straight. Would you be so
2 kind as to sign it and date it? (Indiscernible).

3 A. You going to take it on the (indiscernible).

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Today is the 13th.

5 MR. WOODY: That'll do it.

6 MR. PIVACH: When I leave, the documents that we gave you, could I
7 get a copy of those documents? He brought the originals and I didn't get a copy, if
8 you don't mind.

9 CHIEF BALL: You did not get a copy of the originals?

10 MR. PIVACH: He had brought the originals and I handed them to you.
11 If you just, if you don't mind, along with that document?

12 CHIEF BALL: Yes, that's not going to be a problem.

13 MR. LARUE: Chief, do you have any more questions?

14 CHIEF BALL: I do not.

15 MR. LARUE: Barry? Does anyone else, as we make our way around
16 the room here?

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We're going to keep our mouths shut.

18 MR. LARUE: You don't have to. All right. Well, thank you very much,
19 sir, for coming down here. It's now a couple minutes before 6:00 here and we're
20 going to turn off the tape here.

21 Can you just acknowledge that this is being recorded and you're aware
22 of that?

23 CAPTAIN STRAHAN: Yes, I'm aware of it.

1 MR. LARUE: Okay, thank you very much, sir. I appreciate it.

2 (Whereupon, at 5:58 p.m., the interview in the above-entitled matter

3 was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: Motor Vessel Kition
 Allision With I-10 Bridge
 Baton Rouge, Louisiana
 February 10, 2007
 Interview of Jay Strahan, Jr.

DOCKET NUMBER: DCA-07-FM-013

PLACE: Baton Rouge, Louisiana

DATE: February 13, 2007

was held according to the record, and that this is the original, complete, true
and accurate transcript which has been compared to the recording
accomplished at the hearing.

Kimberly J. Zogby
Transcriber